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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003797

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIT/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/10/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: CHEN RESPONDS PUBLICLY TO USG CONCERNS OVER
CONSTITUTION

REF: A. TAIPEI 3782

[1](#)B. TAIPEI 2662

[1](#)C. TAIPEI 3162

[1](#)D. TAIPEI 3563

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: President Chen Shui-bian used an open press meeting with a group of visiting U.S. Congressmen on November 30 to respond to the State Department Spokesman's warning over constitutional revisions. Chen stated that there has been no change to the policy line he articulated in his May 20 inaugural address, October 10 National Day speech, and November "10 Points" policy statement. Chen noted that the constitutional referendum he referred to on November 27 is consistent with the established constitutional processes. Other Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) officials echoed this theme in an effort to respond to Pan-Blue characterizations of the State Department statement as a USG rebuke to Chen over his recent campaign rhetoric. End Summary.

Chen Responds to U.S. Comments

[1](#)2. (C) Presidential Office Deputy Secretary General James Huang informed the AIT Director that President Chen Shui-bian used a November 30 press availability to respond to concerns raised by State Department Spokesman Boucher on November 29 over Chen's recent references to a constitutional referendum. During an open press meeting with a group of visiting U.S. Members of Congress, President Chen told reporters that he will not waver during his last term in office from his May 20, 2004 inaugural promises. Chen stated that Taiwan will conduct the upcoming round of constitutional revisions within the bounds of current constitutional procedures. Chen explained that his recent statement about a constitutional referendum in 2006 (Ref A) referred to rules established under the draft set of constitutional provisions passed by the Legislative Yuan (LY) on August 23, 2004 (Ref B). Chen added that he will not deviate from his 2000 "five no's pledge" and the policy platforms laid out in his May 20 inauguration address, October 10 National Address (Ref C), and November 10 "10 Points" speech (Ref D). (Note: Open press events are a common feature of presidential meetings with visiting dignitaries. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (SBU) Presidential Office Deputy SecGen Huang held a subsequent press conference to amplify on the president's remarks and reiterate Taipei's willingness to engage with the U.S. and other international partners over the constitutional revision process. In the course of the afternoon, the Premier, MOFA Spokesman, and DPP party officials echoed the president's line in their efforts to keep the State Department statement out of the pre-election media spotlight. DPP LY Caucus Leader Tsai Huang-lang told reporters that the DPP would pursue constitutional revisions within the bounds set by President Chen's "five no's." Tsai also noted that before constitutional revisions are submitted for approval by public referendum, they will require prior endorsement by three-quarters of the LY membership. Tsai and other DPP officials said they would "communicate" this information to the U.S. side to clarify apparent "misunderstandings."

Pan-Blue Hails Warning

[1](#)4. (SBU) Pan-Blue officials quickly claimed that the Spokesman's remarks vindicated their recent assertions that Chen is leading Taiwan towards a cross-Straits crisis. KMT Spokesman Chang Jung-kung characterized the State Department statement as a serious rebuke to President Chen and an indication that the USG fears a coming cross-Straits conflict. People First Party (PFP) LY Caucus Leader Liu Wen-hsiung told reporters that the USG comments reflected the depth of problems that have arisen in cross-Straits ties under the Chen government.

Comment: A Useful Reminder

[1](#)5. (C) The November 29 Spokesman's comments should serve as a

useful reminder to Taiwan's political actors that the ongoing LY election campaign is not being conducted in a vacuum. Insiders may argue that USG public warnings have less direct impact on the ongoing political campaign as they did during the presidential race due to the localized nature of LY elections and the expected low turnout among conservative centrist voters. Nevertheless, the DPP is eager to portray itself as the pro-American party -- and portray the opposition as anti-U.S. -- and thus may take the November 29 statement as a warning that further rebukes will be forthcoming if Chen does not tone down his rhetoric. Taipei's quick reaction to the State Department statement serves as yet another reminder that public, as opposed to private, warnings are a highly effective means for focusing minds in Taiwan's media-driven political world.

PAAL